

Troy Bagnall, Ex-Christian, USA



My name is Troy Bagnall. I'm a 22-year-old (soon to be 23) college student at Arizona State University (ASU) from Phoenix, Arizona in the US. I'm in a film & media studies program at ASU too.

I accepted Islam this past February for a multitude of reasons. I had been interested in Islam for quite some time, as it is a hot topic when it comes to the news and current events. I am very interested in ancient history and world history as well as war and politics.

As I would hear about conflicts in the news that were happening in places such as Sudan, Somalia, Palestine, Iraq, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Chechnya, Lebanon, etc., I would research those conflicts simply so I would understand what was really happening in those conflicts as the media here tends to be very vague in explaining them in a fair and unbiased manner.

As I researched the conflicts, I also became interested in learning about the history of the Muslim world. I spent time on my own learning about some of the history and culture of the Muslim world. I also took a class at ASU called Islamic Civilization. As I learned about the history and culture of the Muslim world, I became interested in the religion, Islam, itself.

I had been raised Christian but quit practicing it when I was 15. I personally found Christianity to be very confusing and not logical. The trinity and doctrine of atonement really do not make sense considering there are verses from the Bible that contradict those doctrines.

When I took the Islamic History class I met a brother named Mohammad Totah who is very knowledgeable in the Bible, Quran, and all three Abrahamic faiths. We had many talks about comparing the faiths. I researched on my own as well. I learned more about how Christianity contradicts its own scriptures.

I learned more about how many Biblical scriptures actually support Islam too. Another thing that got me too was the Gospel of Barnabas which prophesized and

mentioned by name, the coming of Muhammad (peace be upon him). This Gospel was also removed from the Bible.

Now to the Quran, which is beyond amazing with its flawlessness. I found the Quran to be quite simple and easy to comprehend. Islam itself is a very simple and straightforward with no complex doctrines. Islam does not feature the blind faith that Christianity does.

It also has a feeling of fulfillment that Judaism does not have as Judaism denies later prophets such as Jesus (peace be upon him) and John the Baptist (peace be upon him) for example.

As I learned more about Islam, I realized that it made sense of the uncertainties I had with Christianity. I actually know more about the Bible and Christianity now since reverting to Islam than I did while I was a Christian.

I feel much closer to God as a Muslim, too. Not to bash Christianity, but I find it to be more about the teachings of Paul and the other Apostles instead of the teachings of Jesus (peace be upon him).

I also spent much time learning about the history of the religions after they were established and how they spread across the world. I know that Islam is portrayed as being some exotic eastern religion here in the west, but it is really just what all the prophets were sent to teach, which is submission to God. It is also really frustrating how the media always portrays Islam in such a negative light.

I understand there are conflicts and violence in parts of the Muslim world, but those conflicts are really more about politics.

Yes, I will admit that it has been a bit tough practicing Islam considering I do live in America and the media here pushes negative stereotypes about Islam all the time. It is also a bit tough on me simply because it is not like there are many American college kids giving up the carefree party life and converting to Islam.

That was not much of a problem for me though, as I am pretty much a studious nerd. I get questions from non-Muslims concerning politics and Middle Eastern cultural practices, and I have to show them the difference between what is really Islam and what is political ideology and cultural practices.

The Middle East is obviously the center of the Muslim world, but it is frustrating too how the media stereotypes Muslims as always being Middle Eastern, as Muslims come from all over the world. I think racism is involved too, as the West seems to overlook the fact that Judaism and Christianity's origins lay in the Middle East just like Islam.

To sum it up, I accepted Islam simply because I declared it to be the true religion of God. It is simple, straightforward, and not confusing.

I also love how Islam has such a universal bond of unity amongst its followers. Islam has helped me to become a better person.

I feel at ease when I practice Islam. It helps me feel better about life and helps me deal with stress and life problems.

I really hope that people here in the West become better educated on the Muslim world and what Islam really is as a religion instead of listening to the negative and not always entirely true criticisms that the media portrays about Islam.

I hope my story will inspire those who are interested in Islam to want to learn more about it.